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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1946

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1293

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3334

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2720

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000221

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM PINS KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OPPOSITION MP CLAIMS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

REF: A. A. BISHKEK 206

1B. B. BISHKEK 156

BISHKEK 00000221 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with DCM on March 6, member of Parliament from the opposition Social Democratic Party Bakyt Beshimov claimed that he had survived an assassination attempt in the form of a staged car accident in the mountains outside Jalalabad, and that GKNB Chairman Satalinov told him privately during a Parliamentary session: "We'll take care of you. I personally will crush you." Beshimov said that this and other incidents of government harassment and threats have placed him and his relatives under "incredible pressure." In a separate meeting, DCM met with Ata Meken member and former Deputy Speaker Erkinbek Alymbekov, who laid out Ata Meken's strategy for the coming year. Ata Meken is against removing President Bakiyev before the end of his term, because they believe it would lead to political chaos.  
END SUMMARY.

"Staged Car Accident"

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12. (C) In a meeting with DCM on March 6, opposition party (Social Democrats, or SPDK) member and Parliamentary deputy Bakyt Beshimov claimed that he had survived an assassination attempt. He was recently traveling in Osh and Jalalabad provinces, and his car, bearing Parliamentary tags, was stopped three times by the police. They took the license of his driver, and each time warned him to "be careful." Driving back from Jalalabad, his assistant, who had preceded them in a different car, flagged them down just before the car entered a mountain tunnel, and warned them that there was a "staged car accident" waiting for them ahead. They proceeded slowly, and at the other end of the tunnel, around a sharp curve, they found a truck without plates parked in the right lane of the road. Beshimov explained, "What they do is wait until you move into the left (oncoming) lane to pass the truck, and send another truck down the road to hit you." Beshimov said they turned around and took back roads back to Osh, from where they flew to Bishkek, rather than

risking another staged accident.

"I Personally Will Crush You"

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¶3. (C) Beshimov also claimed that GKNB Chairman Sutalinov had personally threatened him. He said that he had asked Sutalinov about Islamic terrorism in the South during a parliamentary session on March 5, and Sutalinov had replied "We are taking care of it. Your concern is baseless." Then, during a break, Sutalinov approached Beshimov, and told him: "We'll take care of you. I personally will crush you." And perplexingly, he added: "We are improving our relations with the CIA." Beshimov said that this and other incidents of government harassment and threats have placed him and his relatives under "incredible pressure."

¶4. (C) Beshimov believes that President Bakiyev is concerned about the possibility that either he, or Almaz Atambayev, the SDPK Chairman, might run for President. Both are from the South, and Southern politicians have told Beshimov that people in the South are increasingly unhappy with Bakiyev. Beshimov appeared optimistic about his popular appeal, claiming that 600 people had braved government harassment to hear him speak in Osh, and that they had "taken over" the local drama theater.

Ata Meken: Against Booting Bakiyev

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¶5. (C) In a separate meeting, DCM met in early March with Ata Meken member and former Deputy Speaker Erkinbek Alymbekov, who laid out Ata Meken's strategy for the coming

BISHKEK 00000221 002.2 OF 002

year. Alymbekov said that Ata Meken was not planning to participate in any spring demonstrations, and Ata Meken was against removing President Bakiyev before the end of his term, because they believe it would lead to chaos: The Prime Minister would flee to Russia, the rubber stamp Ak Jol Parliament would dissolve, and the opposition would squabble and remain fragmented, potentially leading to exacerbated religious and north-south strife.

¶6. (C) Instead, Ata Meken was readying itself for early elections, which they believe Bakiyev will hold before October, so that the opposition does not have time to organize and raise money. They expect the opposition to unify around Ata Meken Party Chairman Omurbek Tekebayev, in spite of the recent scandal involving nude pictures of him with an unidentified woman (Ref B). Alymbekov minimized the political damage from the incident, saying that the government had tipped its hand too soon, trying to counter demonstrations in March, instead of elections later in the year, when everyone will have forgotten about the scandal.

¶7. (C) Ata Meken's strategy for the coming elections focuses on organizing voter monitoring teams, and strong criticism of Bakiyev. Alymbekov claimed that 70 percent of the population, especially in the South, opposes Bakiyev. But on election day, the Central Election Commission will declare Bakiyev the winner, regardless of the voting tallies. Therefore, Ata Meken's primary goal in the coming months is to organize voters at the grass roots level so that they can expose and prevent fraud on the day of the election. They plan to focus their criticisms on the Bakiyev family's greed as the primary cause of Kyrgyzstan's economic problems, and on Bakiyev's selling out to Kazakhstan and Russia, particularly on Manas Air Base. Regarding Ata Meken's foreign policy, should they ever come to power, Alymbekov said the opposition wanted the "Finland" model: to be close to Russia, but independent, and enjoy good ties with the U.S., South Korea, and other regional powers.

Insights into Manas Air Base

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¶8. (C) Both Beshimov and Alymbekov offered unsolicited insights and suggestions into the question of Manas Air Base's continued existence. Alymbekov said that the deal to close the Base was made in October/November in Sochi, when Presidents Bakiyev and Medvedev went on a hunt together. He thought that the U.S. and Russia should negotiate directly, but doubted that Bakiyev would be able to manage keeping both the Base and the promised Russian aid. Beshimov, for his part, urged against the U.S. striking another deal with Bakiyev over the base. Although Beshimov was the only Deputy to vote against denouncing the Base Agreement, he argued that a new deal on the Base would damage the U.S. reputation as a supporter of democracy and human rights. He welcomed U.S. statements regarding democracy and human rights concerns, and said that if made with Europe, they would be even stronger.

Comment

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¶9. (C) Alymbekov also mentioned the "pressure" his family and friends were under from the government, which is part of a growing pattern of harassment of opposition leaders. Beshimov's story about a possible staged accident lends credence to widespread concerns that the subsequent death of former Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov in a car crash was a political assassination (ref A).

GFOELLER